

State Representative **Duane Cheney**

Helping Hoosier Families

113th Indiana General Assembly, Spring 2004

Session Report



**Property
Tax Relief**

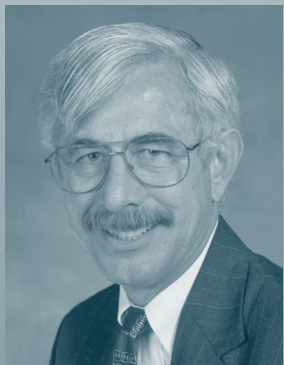


**Protecting
Children**



**Prescription
Drug Costs**





113th General Assembly Ends

Dear Friends,

The 2004 short session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended. I have detailed several important pieces of legislation in this newsletter, including property tax relief, children's safety issues and increased access to affordable prescription drugs.

I hope you find this information useful, and I will keep you updated over the next few months on other legislation that should have a positive impact on you and your family. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about state government.

Sincerely,



Property Tax Relief

When the Indiana General Assembly restructured our state's tax code in 2002, one goal from that effort was to give homeowners relief from the court-ordered reassessment. As the first series of assessments were completed, it became apparent that homeowners were facing an increasingly larger share of the burden passed to them by Indiana's courts.

Because of their concerns, House members led an effort to begin the 2004 session ahead of time. Starting in November, legislators began discussions on additional reforms that resulted in passage of Senate Enrolled Act 1, which contains nearly **\$500 million in property tax cuts for homes, businesses and farms**. It provides additional protections from both the court-ordered reassessment and unchecked local property tax increases.

When lawmakers returned in



January, our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most. We were able to pass another measure (Senate Enrolled Act 296) that increases **property tax deductions for seniors on lower incomes, veterans, the blind and disabled**, as well as those who are rehabilitating homes.

House Enrolled Act 1005 takes additional steps to find other means of financing government services. One study committee will explore alternatives to the property tax, while another will examine the efficiency of local government operations.

This measure also sets up the groundwork for keeping property taxpayers better informed. A pilot program getting under way in 2005 will provide taxpayers in certain counties with detailed breakdowns on their **tax statements that will show where their tax dollars are being used**. Additionally, people who are financing or refinancing a home will be given information on the types of tax deductions available.

In January our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most.

**Representative Duane
Cheney addresses the
House of
Representatives
during the
2004 session.**



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Protecting Children

Legislators Address Safety Issues

During the 2004 session, several protection bills were passed guarding children. Legislators passed bills to protect children from abuse and neglect, and keep them safe in automobiles.

•**House Bill 1194** will provide tools to protect children from abuse or neglect. Criminal history checks will be required for each person who resides in a home in which a child is to be placed before the child is placed there. Child Protective Services (CPS) reports may now conclude if abuse or neglect is “indicated,” as well as “substantiated” or “unsubstantiated.” There will be an additional public disclosure in cases where a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect. A statewide group will be created under the bill to investigate the sudden and/or unexpected deaths of children.

•**House Bill 1245** will levy tougher penalties against people who neglect a child who ends up dying as a result of the crime. The bill will increase the penalty for neglect of a dependent to a

Class A Felony if the neglect results in the death of a child. Penalties will be increased for contributing to the delinquency of a minor if a person 21 years or older provides alcohol or a controlled substance to a minor, and the consumption of that alcohol or drug is determined to cause a death of any person.

•**Senate Bill 194** will provide added protections for all children in a home where abuses have taken place.

•**House Bill 1098** will require anyone who operates a motor vehicle with a passenger who is less than 8 years of age to place the child in a restraint system. Passengers between 8 and 16 years old will be required to wear a seat belt. Studies have indicated that child restraint systems can help prevent injuries caused when children do not properly fit in a safety belt.

In addition, the bill will create a Child Restraints System Account that will make grants to private and public organizations to purchase and distribute child restraint systems such as booster seats at minimal or no charge.



Medication Savings

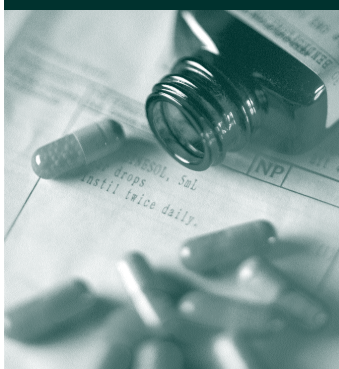
Hoosiers Gain Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs

Legislators also worked hard to protect Hoosiers from the rising costs of prescription drugs. Under a plan approved this session, more than **400,000 Hoosiers would gain access to affordable prescription drugs**, with many more qualifying in years to come.

House Bill 1265 enables the state to set up an aggregate prescription drug purchasing program to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs from phar-

maceutical companies. **Indiana will also be able to enter into joint purchasing agreements with other states, gaining added bargaining power.**

People who sign up for the program will get a prescription drug card to receive the savings when they fill their prescriptions at their local drugstores. This program will simplify the lives of many and improve the conditions for people on fixed and limited incomes.



Helping Hoosier Families



Representative Duane Cheney listens to a debate in the House chamber.

Contact Representative Duane Cheney

District 10

Statehouse

200 W. Washington
Indianapolis, IN 46204

317-232-9600

1-800-382-9842

Online

H10@in.gov

www.in.gov/H10

Additional Bills Passed

There were several other significant pieces of legislation passed by the General Assembly.

House Bill 1029 will allow a custodial parent to bring a court action to **recover delinquent child support payments** by intercepting the state income tax return of the parent responsible for the obligation.

House Bill 1229, called The Indiana Homeowner Protection Act, places **tougher restrictions on the practice called predatory lending**. Homeowners will be protected from overpriced loans with unreasonable terms that often are impossible to pay back, placing people at risk or losing their homes through foreclosure.

House Bill 1449 will help restore the constitutionality of **Indiana's curfew law** by including provisions that protect minors who are exercising First Amendment rights.

House Bill 1178 will allow courts to create a program **permitting volunteers to become advocates for seniors**. Probate courts will be allowed to appoint trained and supervised volunteers to serve as guardians for a limited time to incapacitated or protected elderly who are at-risk inpatients in health care facilities in Indiana.

House Bill 1306 will allow members, survivors, and beneficiaries of the **Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF)** and Teacher's Retirement Fund (TRF) to receive a cost-of-living adjustment beginning in 2005.

House Bill 1171 creates a **statewide Stroke Prevention Task Force** to develop several prevention initiatives. The task force will develop and implement a statewide public education program and provide specific preventions strategies for healthcare professionals, and guidelines on helping and handling stroke patients.

House Bill 1044 enforces a mandatory \$5,000 fine for any employee of the Indiana Department of Correction or a penal facility who is caught **trafficking tobacco products** with an inmate.

Rep. Duane Cheney

Indiana House of Representatives
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

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